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ABSTRACT

To provide a framework for the design and implementation of school improvement efforts, this booklet presents summaries of research on major factors influencing student achievement--school and classroom characteristics, educational expenditures, the quantity and quality of professional staff, and social environment--and conclusions based on that research. Sections also address the special problems of high schools and review research on the major obstructions to, and successful strategies for, implementing school improvements. (DCS)

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The Quest for Excellence

Making Public Schools More Effective

EA 017 835

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By Thomas B. Corcoran and Barbara J. Hansen

The Quest for Excellence

Making Public Schools More Effective

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Thomas B. Corcoran
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Barbara J. Hansen

NEW JERSEY SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION
315 West State Street, P.O. Box 909, Trenton, New Jersey 08605

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foreword

This publication is an outgrowth of the work of the Urban Education Study Committee of the New Jersey School Boards Association. This committee, made up of board members representing a cross-section of urban, suburban and rural districts from throughout New Jersey, spent many months investigating the research presented here and developing recommendations based on that research. This publication is an adaptation and expansion of the Committee's report.

The Committee was aided in its work by Carl L. Marburger, National Committee for Citizens in Education, and Frederick McDonald, New York University. Much of the research was presented to the Committee by Thomas Corcoran, Research for Better Schools, Inc., through a grant from the National Institute of Education (Grant OB-NIE-G-78-0207). The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the National Institute of Education, and no official endorsement by the National Institute of Education should be inferred. The New Jersey School Boards Association is grateful to Dr. Marburger, Dr. McDonald and Research for Better Schools for their assistance. This publication also benefits from the material developed by Philip Mackey and others on the staff task force assigned to the Committee. Special thanks must also go to Paul Flohn, Chairman, and members of the Urban Education Study Committee for their dedication to improving public schools. We trust the information contained here will aid those who share their dedication.

Lloyd Newbaker
New Jersey School Boards Association
March 3, 1983

introduction

One doesn't have to be paying close attention to hear the dirge for public education these days. The annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll on America's opinion of the public education system continues to reflect the low opinion our friends and neighbors have of our public schools. James Coleman's latest report claims that nonpublic schools are better than their public counterparts and provides ammunition for the supporters of tuition tax credits. In the 1960's, critics told us that the schools were failing to teach the basic skills. The critics of the 1980's have concluded that too much emphasis on the basics is undermining excellence in the schools. Newspapers everywhere carry stories of violence and vandalism in urban (and, occasionally, suburban and rural) schools. Television talk shows feature advocates of everything from fundamentalist academies to home schooling.

Lost in the hubbub are the voices of those who have evidence that public schools aren't dying; that there are schools that are vital and effective. The voices belong to researchers looking for and at schools where students are mastering the basics and achieving more than their socio-economic background would predict. They have found, in spite of an enormous variation in wealth, size, and social conditions, effective schools and classrooms do share some common characteristics. The findings of these researchers provide a basis for diagnosing problems and formulating strategies to improve less effective schools.

The problems facing public education are real and there are seldom easy answers. Yet the central issue — student achievement — can and must be addressed. That is what this book is about. In it you will find summaries of the research on the major factors influencing student achievement — money, social environment, school and classroom characteristics, and the quantity and quality of professional staff — and conclusions based on that research. The special problems of the high school are reviewed in a separate section. The final section reviews research on successful strategies for implementing improvements in schools. It is our hope that this information will be used as a framework for the design and implementation of school improvement efforts.

School Characteristics and Achievement

The belief that the policies and practices of the public schools make little difference for achievement and life chances of children has done much to obstruct educational progress. Scholars have used this argument to attack public schools. Politicians have used it to argue against adequate school funding. Taxpayers groups have used the argument to contest the equalization of educational resources between suburbs and cities. And educators have used it as an excuse for running schools that are less effective than they could and should be.

This argument first received widespread public attention with the publication of James Coleman's *Equality of Educational Opportunity* and the subsequent re-analysis of Coleman's data by Christopher Jencks and others.[55] Coleman's major conclusions were that most children attended segregated schools and that there were vast disparities in the resources available to children within and among school districts. However, the most publicized findings were that characteristics of students' homes were more important in determining students' achievement than school characteristics. Thus, while his findings provided some impetus to federal and state desegregation efforts, the more popular interpretations of Coleman's research had the opposite effect because they reinforced commonly held prejudices. Why direct more resources to public schools, if children's home environments made educational success unlikely?

EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS

Some scholars set out to demonstrate that Coleman's assertions were wrong by directly testing the proposition that schools had little or no impact on educational achievement. They asked:

Are there schools which are effective for black children and poor children?
If so, are there systematic differences between such schools and other, less effective, schools?

Since 1970, numerous independent studies have been conducted of urban schools where students' performance on basic skills tests was higher than would be predicted by their social class and race. Researchers directed their attention to understanding what made these schools "work".

Studies of effective schools were conducted in Michigan,[15,16,17] New York,[78] Delaware,[96] Maryland,[5] and California.[21] Further studies were conducted in large urban school districts such as Detroit,[59] Philadelphia,[56,105]

New York City,[35] Newark,[74] Seattle,[84] New Haven,[27] and London.[88] Additional studies are underway in other urban communities. Corroborating evidence has been found in studies of public and private schools,[25] evaluations of ESAA programs,[31] a study of the Los Angeles reading program,[3] a study of school violence[102] and a number of studies examining implementation of school improvements.[9]

These studies suffer from some important limitations. Most of them are correlational studies from which cause and effect can only be surmised. Most of the studies have been conducted in elementary schools, making it difficult to know if their generalizations apply to the more complex organizational setting of high schools. Furthermore, the studies have addressed basic skills effectiveness but they have not examined the attainment of other educational goals. It is possible that some of the policies and practices associated with high basic skills performance could restrict the achievement of other educational goals. There may be trade-offs in the allocation of time, for example, that would inhibit effectiveness in other curricular areas. Nevertheless, in spite of these and other methodological limitations, the research on effective schools offers new insight into the problems of urban schools and suggests new directions for their solution.[24,35,56] What's more, the findings appear to be equally applicable to suburban and rural schools; board members, administrators and teaching staff from all types of school districts find the effective school research to be a useful guide for improving policy and practice.

A synthesis of this research paints a portrait of the effective school in three dimensions: school organization, school climate, and school management. Each demonstrates that student learning is contingent upon more than what happens within a given classroom.

Effective schools organize themselves (**Table 1**) around clear, commonly-held goals. And those goals are focused on student achievement. Time and other resources are directed toward learning. Care is taken to ensure that what is being taught at one grade level is aligned with that of following levels and that tests used actually measure what is being taught. Student progress is monitored frequently and results used to identify program weaknesses. The staff has the freedom to make decisions needed to achieve the school's goals. Parents are involved in, and supportive of, the school.

Effective schools are led by effective managers (**Table 2**). The principals of these schools are actively involved in the educational operations of their schools. They care about student learning and focus the energy of staff and students toward that end. They are strong leaders, but at the same time, they value and support both individual autonomy and collaboration.

A school is more than a collection of adults and students operating within individual spheres. It is an organization with its own unique set of values and norms; its own sense of identity. In effective schools, the climate (**Table 3**) is characterized by a belief that all students can learn —

Table 1

Organizational Characteristics of Effective Schools

1) Typical of effective schools is a high degree of consensus around clearly articulated goals. The goals help shape the allocation of time and other resources and provide focus for the daily operations of the schools.[5,15,16,96,105]

2) In effective schools, learning time is highly valued. Efforts are made to reduce disruptions, improve scheduling, reduce student movement, reduce the number of non-academic events, increase the length of school days, and improve classroom management.[4,15,96,105]

3) The formal curriculum, the curriculum that is taught and the content of tests are highly aligned in effective schools. There is careful articulation from one grade level to the next.[15,25,105]

4) In effective schools, the staff have considerable autonomy to determine their policies and programs within the framework of district policy and to solve the problems they encounter in attempting to raise academic achievement.[9,14,88]

5) Effective schools have high academic standards and monitor pupil performance frequently. Staff use sound assessment practices, participate in the analysis of test data, and use test data to identify program weaknesses.[15,16,25,35,78,96,105,107]

6) Effective schools maintain frequent communications between the home and school. The evidence concerning the influence of parental involvement on school effectiveness is growing. It also seems self-evident that parental support is needed to create the conditions necessary for school effectiveness and that parental involvement in their own children's academic work is essential to success.[3,5,16,54,78]

given the desire to do so — and that it is the responsibility of the staff to create the conditions under which learning is desirable and possible. Effective schools are warm and friendly places to be; there is order without oppression. Staff members and students share a strong sense of community, pride in achievement and progress, and trust in one another.

These factors reaffirm both common sense and the views of many practitioners. Furthermore, they demonstrate that public schools can be effective and do have significant influence on the lives of children. This research does not provide a recipe for creating effective schools, but it does create a much needed framework for analyzing school problems and designing school improvement programs. The findings also suggest criteria for the selection and evaluation of school administrators.

Creating effective schools requires more than a mere awareness of the critical factors. Creating the desired conditions may be difficult and, once attained, may not result in immediate gains in student achievement. Further studies may provide us with more precise descriptions of effective schools and isolate the specific "causal" elements at work. In the meantime, we can say that the research supports the need for school districts to

Table 2

Management Characteristics of Effective Schools

1) The principals are assertive leaders; they set clear goals and provide direction to their staff. They offer a vision for the school based upon values which can be, and are, publicly articulated.[5,15,16,105,107]

2) The principals are achievement-oriented. They stress academics; their personal use of time and their allocation of resources and rewards reflects this priority. Their goals tend to be expressed in terms of student learning.[15,56,105]

3) The principals emphasize evaluation of the school and its programs; they hold the staff accountable for results. They lead a process of problem identification and analysis to improve the performance of the school.[21,23,36,61]

4) The principals are active supervisors, spending considerable time in classrooms and in discussions with staff about curriculum and instruction. Their expertise in the technical processes of schooling is respected by the staff.[3,5,23,56,61,72,105]

5) The principals respect the professionalism of their staff members. Strong accountability is balanced by optimal autonomy for the teaching staff. They maintain effective communications with staff and provide frequent feedback to teachers.[3,14,69]

6) The principals provide for staff participation in the development of school policies and plans, the design and implementation of staff development, and other decisions affecting work in the school. They reward efforts of teachers to work together cooperatively.[3,5,21,22,74,78,96,105]

☐ use the research as one basis for periodic self-studies and program evaluations;

☐ establish clear and attainable goals expressed in terms of student achievement;

☐ establish procedures to monitor content coverage in all subject areas and to periodically review the alignment between curriculum and assessment;

☐ review the amount of autonomy and discretion provided for building level administrators to determine whether they have the authority needed to lead the school;

☐ define the job of principal in a manner consistent with the research by reducing unproductive tasks and specifying the responsibilities of instructional leadership;

☐ emphasize the optimal use of available instructional time and insure procedures are in place to reduce disruptions and student movement between classes. Few non-academic events should be scheduled during the

Table 3

Climate Characteristics of Effective Schools

1) High expectations of success and school-wide recognition of academic achievement and progress are attributes of effective schools. High expectations extend to effort and cooperation as well as to performance. School-wide recognition may take the form of honors, ceremonies, publications, announcements, rewards, posters, and other means of demonstrating the importance of achievement. The school staff take visible pride in the academic accomplishment of their students.[5,15,16,17,21,35,74,88,105,107]

2) Order, discipline, and a business-like atmosphere are features of effective schools. Rules are fairly enforced and discipline procedures are uniform throughout the school. The resulting sense of security and order builds responsibility and a sense of pride.[3,35,78,88,107]

3) Effective schools have a cooperative and friendly atmosphere. Administration and staff work closely together and there is a strong sense of community. Teachers share materials and talk to each other frequently about curriculum and instruction. There is low turnover and the resulting stability builds commitment to school goals and high levels of trust, cooperation and motivation.[3,5,21,56,74,78,105]

4) The physical facilities may not be new or modern but they are safe and clean. And they provide adequate work space. Attractive and pleasant working conditions contribute to higher levels of staff and student motivation and achievement.[25,71,73,88]

5) The faculty of effective schools take responsibility for the outcomes of the educational programs and treat poor results as problems to be solved.[15,16]

school day. Boards of education should consider lengthening the school day and the school year and should provide staff inservice programs designed to improve classroom management;

☐ establish policies and procedures that provide for staff participation in planning and decision-making at the district and building levels and;

☐ establish mechanisms for collecting and assessing evidence of staff and student pride, high expectations of student achievement, the quality of student work, staff and student cooperation, and the character of the working environment in the schools.

In addition, parent and citizen involvement should be promoted by:

☐ encouraging frequent communication by teachers and parents with an aim towards fostering an attitude of trust among the public and staff;

☐ providing opportunities for parents to visit schools on a regular basis;

☐ providing full and complete information to staff and the public on such

things as test results, staff and student attendance figures, incidence of disciplinary action, and number of student dropouts. Wherever possible, comparative data from other districts should be included;

- ☐ training staff and the public to promote public involvement;
- ☐ making schools more accessible to all members of the community;
- ☐ establishing clear grievance policies and procedures;
- ☐ involving citizens in the development of school and district policies and;
- ☐ initiating pilot programs of parent councils and sharing information on such programs.

The studies on effective schools have given a much needed boost to public education and especially urban education. They have directed attention to problems which can be solved and to factors that may make a difference for student achievement. Most important, policy makers and educational leaders have been persuaded to look at the school as a whole rather than to pursue piecemeal efforts at innovation and improvement. Institutional development of the school has replaced incremental tinkering with programs as the focus of school improvement.

EFFECTIVE CLASSROOMS

During the same period in which the research on effective schools was being conducted, teams of researchers were studying the relationship between student achievement and teacher behavior in the classroom. Careful research designs, new classroom observation systems, large samples of classrooms, and replication of studies have produced a cumulative set of research findings about teaching which should not be ignored. These studies confirm or complement effective schools research findings. However, their superior methodology and longitudinal designs place these studies of teaching on even firmer ground. The findings already have been used successfully to train teachers to become more effective instructors. While these studies do not agree in every detail, they have given rise to a set of general principles about teaching which most scholars now accept.[18] These principles are:

1) Effective teachers have high expectations of success and a strong sense of personal efficacy (the ability to achieve results). Effective teachers believe their students can learn and do not accept the conventional rationalizations for failure. They treat student failure as a personal challenge and accept the responsibility for teaching their students.[20,50,67,100]

2) Effective teachers are purposeful and organize their classrooms to ensure that maximum time is spent on instruction. They begin classes on time and teach until the bell. Students are provided more opportunities to learn in their classrooms.[45,87,88]

3) Effective teachers are also good managers. They establish clear class-

room procedures and set up their classrooms carefully before school begins. On the first day of school, they teach the procedures. They also use effective group management techniques to minimize disruption and time loss.[2,19,40,70,97]

4) Effective teachers pace instruction to maintain motivation. They match the difficulty of assignments to the achievement level of the student. Students learn best and are most motivated when they proceed rapidly in small, successful steps. Effective teachers make sure new skills and knowledge are mastered before going on to the next topic.[2,11,19,45,57,97]

5) Effective teachers are active teachers. They are highly verbal; they constantly teach, whether it is to the entire class or a small group. They instruct before giving independent work to students and actively supervise student work.[18,51,67,97]

6) Effective teachers maintain an academic focus within a warm, supportive environment. Their classrooms are friendly and they are enthusiastic. They maintain high standards but are seen as supportive by their students.[100]

7) Effective teachers reward high performance and foster it through praise, encouragement, and individual attention to student work.[18,100]

8) Effective teachers set regular homework for students and make sure it is done at home — not in school.[74,88]

9) Instruction is most effective when school policies and procedures minimize absenteeism, tardiness, cuts, and intrusions. These disruptions are affected by classroom conditions, as well as administrative behavior.[18,97]

10) Teachers are more effective when they are assigned classrooms. The organization of the classroom and materials is so critical that "floating teachers" have much less chance of being successful.[97]

These findings have clear implications for supervision and for inservice education. Techniques for keeping track of content coverage and student work-time have been developed and tested successfully. Programs designed to heighten teacher awareness about the impact of their expectations and use of praise on student learning have been used with great effectiveness. Methods of assessing curricular alignment are available. Policies for standards and homework have been adopted in many districts. The means are available for putting this research into practice. Implementation poses problems, as will be noted later, but these problems can be, and have been, overcome.

Four sets of related research findings deserve comment. The first set of studies—research on class size—has produced considerable controversy. Researchers do not agree on how or whether class size affects achievement. A recent synthesis of this research by Smith and Glass[95] found that

class size does affect achievement within certain ranges; however, their analysis has produced a vigorous debate on the issue.[38,47] Nevertheless, three conclusions can be drawn:

1) the importance of class size varies with the instructional purpose of the class, the age and needs of the pupils, and the amount of student work to be reviewed by the teacher;

2) teachers cannot behave in the manner described in the research on effective teaching when class sizes grow beyond reasonable levels; and

3) the benefits of small classes (those with enrollments below fifteen) are attained only if the teachers make appropriate changes in their instructional methods.

The effectiveness of "pull-out" programs is also a controversial issue. Again, research evidence does not provide us with clear answers. Recent studies of compensatory education have concluded that pull-out programs have little positive effect on achievement and may have negative effects due to lost instructional time and problems of coordination.[28,48,73] However, other studies of compensatory education and ESEA Title I have found pull-out programs to be effective. For example, one recent study of secondary compensatory programs found that students made the most progress when they were assigned to small, homogeneous groups.[97] However, in elementary schools this usually is done by pulling students out of their regular classrooms, creating problems of coordination and sometimes resulting in loss of instructional time. The effectiveness of pull-out programs depends upon the amount of disruption caused, the amount of instructional time the child loses in the regular classroom, the adequacy of the communication among teachers, and the amount of time teachers devote to record keeping and paperwork rather than instruction. Given the ambiguous findings, pull-out programs should be used only where absolutely necessary and should be carefully monitored.

A third area of research deserving mention covers studies of cooperative learning in the classroom. The Teams-Games-Tournaments (TGT) Program developed at Johns Hopkins University and similar approaches have been used successfully in hundreds of schools in Israel, Europe, and the United States, particularly with adolescents. In these programs, small group projects and carefully controlled competition are used to provide incentives for learning. Individual competition is tempered by teamwork and peer tutoring. Students are encouraged to assist one another in order to raise the overall performance of the group. These methods have proven useful in overcoming racial and other group differences and have been found to have significant positive effects on achievement, attendance, self-esteem and attitudes toward school.[94]

The final research issue deals with the impact of ability grouping and tracking on self-esteem and achievement. These two terms have many

different meanings and can take many different forms. Some of the effective schools studies have found ability grouping to be a positive factor if it is designed so that students can move easily among groups and are not locked into one particular group.[15,74] Clearly some form of tracking is necessary in secondary schools where curricular choices and the wide range of student abilities require some differentiation.

As in the case of pull-out programs, the effects of grouping may depend on how it is implemented, e.g., how students are differentiated, how often regrouping occurs, and how well procedures are implemented. School people are well advised to examine the use of ability grouping and tracking carefully. If grouping affects student motivation or staff expectations and standards negatively, the policy will be self-defeating. Clearly, all policies and practices relating to class size, pull-out programs, and ability grouping should be periodically examined to ensure they are making a positive contribution to effectiveness.

dollars and Achievement

Some researchers have found educational expenditures to be related to student achievement; others have concluded that there is no direct relationship between resources and achievement.[6,66,71] The explanation for this disagreement lies in differences in student needs across districts, disparities in resource allocation patterns within school districts, and variation in the abilities of school officials to use resources effectively. Data on per pupil expenditures hide considerable variation in the amount, character and quality of services provided to children.

The cost of an adequate education, however it is defined, varies with the student's program. If a student requires special materials, special facilities, smaller classes, or specially trained staff, the cost of educating the student is higher. Handicapped children, children with little ability to speak English, and children requiring remedial instruction are more expensive to educate. Simply looking at average per pupil expenditures across schools or districts fails to take into account the differences in the proportion of such children in each district. When these special student needs are considered, it becomes clear that districts with the greatest educational needs often have fewer resources than districts with the lowest level of such needs.[52]

Similarly, comparisons of average per pupil expenditures hide important differences in the way school districts allocate their available resources. Some of these differences may be unavoidable, such as variations in maintenance costs and insurance; they may be the result of union contracts; or they may be due to local preferences, such as decisions to spend more on the arts or athletics. Such allocation decisions affect the resources available for instruction and, therefore, obscure an understanding of the relationship between dollar expenditures and student achievement. Other factors such as variations in salary schedules, age and experience of staff, district organization, length of the school day and management practices make it even more difficult to determine how dollars influence learning.

Nevertheless, it seems obvious that low-wealth districts require additional resources if they are to make progress toward the goal of providing all children with effective instruction. However, increasing the dollars available to public schools will not, by itself, guarantee educational improvement. Resources must be used wisely; they must be used to create the conditions under which staff and students can work most productively. Some of the conclusions drawn from the studies of effective public schools and successful teaching practices can be implemented at little additional cost because

they require changes in behavior or reordering of priorities. Others would require additional resources. The improvement of public schools requires *both* additional resources and more effective use of available resources.

The High School and Achievement

During the 1970s, studies by blue-ribbon commissions, foundations and national educational organizations reached a common conclusion: the American secondary school was in trouble.[42] These reports had hardly been digested before new commissions and task forces were appointed to take another critical look at high schools. Numerous secondary school studies are now underway. A flood of new recommendations for reform can be expected soon.

Contemporary critics of public secondary schools cite such problems as poorly articulated educational programs, too much bureaucracy, inflexible routines, lack of work experience, age segregation, too little attention to basic skills, out-of-date curricula, lax discipline, low standards, and too little opportunity for students to learn independence and decision-making. Some observers contend there is a mismatch between the needs of adolescents — generated by the sexual, social, and cognitive changes that take place — and the environment provided by the typical high school. Boredom, and the lack of autonomy are often cited as major problems.[42] Many students drift through school, unenthusiastic, and try to get by with as little work as possible. Other students see school as futile and drop-out or tune-out. Inadequate opportunities for employment are a serious problem affecting the attitudes and motivation of youth.

There are similar problems at the junior high school level, where special efforts are needed to deal with skill deficiencies, potential dropouts, work attitudes, drugs, sex-bias in curricula, and teenage pregnancy.[62] All too often the junior high school offers only a highly diluted version of the high school curriculum. Early adolescents need an educational program to meet their special and changing needs. The problems of the senior high school stem — in part — from the lack of clarity about the educational mission of the junior high school.

Observers may not agree about what causes the malaise in secondary schools, but many indicators support the fact that there is, indeed, cause for concern. Basic skills scores have gone up significantly in elementary schools, but much less so in secondary schools. Dropout rates are rising again after two decades of decline. A recent study by the New Jersey State Department of Education reported a dropout rate of 45 percent in the 30 urban high schools which participated in the state's comprehensive review process.[76] These 30 schools serve 50,000 students. Absenteeism often runs high and cutting classes is a serious problem. The

same 30 high schools had an average absentee rate of over 20 percent. Conditions in the high schools may not be the primary source of these problems, but clearly they contribute to the situation. Moreover, the institution does not seem able to find or implement solutions to its problems.

Meanwhile, secondary schools face new challenges. Laws on minimum standards and new graduation requirements have led to remedial programs at all levels and to changes in curricula. New graduation requirements and upgraded college entrance requirements have drawn public attention to the effectiveness of high schools. New math and science requirements are being added when qualified staff are not available for existing courses. High youth unemployment rates raise questions about curricula and the career counseling and placement services offered by high schools. Secondary schools are being held more accountable for student achievement and are less able to maintain a *laissez faire* attitude toward their results.

RESEARCH ON HIGH SCHOOLS

Research offers only limited insight into how secondary schools function, the factors critical to their effectiveness, and the change strategies most likely to succeed. In the past two decades, research has focused on the problems of early learning and elementary education; issues of adolescence and secondary education have been neglected. The Rand Corporation's 1976 review of various recommendations for secondary school reform found there were too little data to properly assess the recommendations.[99] There is even less known about intermediate schools and junior high schools.[62] However, a number of important studies have been undertaken in the past few years. Among those recently completed are:

The National Survey of High School Principals by the National Institute of Education[1] which focused on the curriculum and organizational properties of secondary schools. Limited somewhat by its methodology and by the perspective of the respondents, the survey found that high schools are less bureaucratic than the critics claim and that they offer a wide assortment of programs and services. Unfortunately, the data are not broken down by community type so the effect of the community setting cannot be determined. Moreover, much of the data may be obsolete due to changing fiscal conditions, the impact of the minimum standards movement, and declining enrollments.

The 1978 Safe School Study,[102] also conducted by the National Institute of Education, which contains case studies of urban secondary schools successfully coping with discipline and security problems. The cases are descriptive and offer some insights into the problems of discipline and the difficulties of implementing new procedures. However, the cases do not deal directly with other measures of effectiveness, such as student achievement.

An Analysis of the National Longitudinal Study of the High School Class of 1972 by Paul Lindsay[60] who looked at the relationship between school size and student participation, satisfaction and attendance. This replicated an earlier study by Barker and Gump.[7] The study found smaller schools have better attendance, higher levels of participation, and higher student satisfaction — particularly for urban students.

The Comparison of Public and Private High Schools by James Coleman and associates[25] who found private high schools safer and better disciplined, offer fewer courses, have better attendance, more homework, higher standards, and fairer discipline and, as a consequence, produce higher levels of achievement. Non-Catholic private schools have smaller classes. This study created considerable controversy and much criticism has been directed at its methods and conclusions.[37,80,85]

The Rutter and Associates Study, Fifteen Thousand Hours,[87] merits special attention. This recent study of 12 inner-city London high schools stands out in two respects: first, the schools were studied over a 5-year period; and, second, the school characteristics were related to four educational outcomes: students' in-school behavior, school attendance, success on school examinations, and delinquency rates. The study's general conclusion is that the school which the student attends matters a great deal. All four student outcomes were found to be statistically associated with school organizational characteristics and with instructional processes prevalent in particular buildings.

Rutter's study found that more effective high schools have a mix of academically able children and children with academic deficiencies. As the proportion of less able children increases past a critical point, there is a greater propensity toward delinquency, lower attendance rates, and lower academic achievement. However, it is the school's "ethos" or climate which the authors conclude is the strongest influence on students as a group.

According to Rutter and his associates, effective high schools are characterized by staff agreement on the goals of the school as a whole; classroom management that actively engages students in learning activities; frequent use of praise and rewards and firm but fair discipline; teachers that begin classes on time and use classroom time effectively; high expectations for academic success coupled with specific procedures and events to recognize and reward success; student responsibility for personal behavior and clearly recognized principles and guidelines for student behavior; immediate feedback to students on what is acceptable performance at school; a clean, comfortable, and well-maintained physical environment; demonstrated concern for individual and group welfare of staff and student; and teacher willingness to provide personal assistance to students. The overall effect of these processes, according to the authors of this study, is to create a positive "ethos" which leads to better results on the four outcomes assessed in the study.

The Rutter and Coleman studies suggest that some of the findings of the

effective schools studies also apply to high schools. A positive climate, order, effective use of time, high standards, recognition of achievement, and consensus on goals are as important for high schools as elementary schools. The same thing can be said for effective instructional practices and classroom management. Clearly, public high schools will have to re-examine the way they are structured, their curricula and their management of instruction if they are to meet the challenges of the 1980's.

PREPARATION FOR EMPLOYMENT

The economy of the United States is changing rapidly. The demand for technically trained workers is increasing while the demand for unskilled workers is declining. "High-tech" is the code word of the 1980's. It refers to both an important economic change and the latest educational fad. The former demands our attention; the latter calls for caution.

Teenage unemployment has been a consistent and growing problem. From 1949 to present, unemployment rates for male teenagers have been three times the rate for adult males. Rates for minority youth have been more than double the general rate for young people and the situation has been worsening since 1970. Official statistics have been criticized for undercounting the unemployed, but these conservative figures show unemployment for minority youth to have been over 30% in 1979, over 40% in 1980 and 1981, and over 50% in 1982.

Unfortunately, educational policies and practices often make a bad situation even worse. Students frequently leave school without knowing how or where to find work and without any knowledge of the educational prerequisites for jobs. Career counseling may be provided too late or not at all; opportunities, such as vocational training, may be missed because the student lacks basic skills prerequisites. The delivery of counseling, and its quality, appear to vary significantly from school to school and across districts. There is considerable variation in student-counselor ratios and in duties assigned to counselors. Many counselors do administrative work and have little time for assisting students. Some counselors work closely with other agencies; others do not. Since many different agencies provide counseling services, each with its own special purpose and its own constituency, cooperation is essential in order to make efficient use of limited resources. Counseling is a critical service of the public schools and it is time to re-examine the way in which it is delivered.

Better counseling is obviously not the sole solution to the problem of teenage unemployment. An effective youth employment policy must first, and foremost, generate more jobs for young people and increase their access to existing jobs. In addition, educational policies and practices must be altered to:

☐ provide more opportunities for work experience for youth while they are in school;

☐ increase the opportunities for students to receive vocational and technical training and improve the basic skills performance of students so they will be accepted in these programs;

☐ develop more flexible vocational programming so it can more quickly respond to changes in local and regional employment needs;

☐ encourage students to follow a course of study leading to post-secondary education or employment or both;

☐ alter the high school curriculum to more closely reflect the realities of the work place. Employers report that listening and speaking skills are as important as reading and writing. Punctuality, cooperation, diligence, determination, and other attitudinal characteristics are critical and they can be taught and learned. However, they will not be learned in schools where students are passive, where absenteeism and tardiness are rampant and where standards are low;

☐ improve the quality of the core curriculum in English, math, social studies, and science to raise the critical thinking and problem-solving skills of students, and;

☐ permit students to leave high school to take paid, full-time employment and re-enter at a later time. If flexibility can be provided for the gifted student who can accelerate to enter college early, it must also be provided for the working student whose family and future may depend on attaining work experience.

The recurrent debates over the value of vocational training versus on-the-job training, and specialization versus general preparation, are meaningless to the high school student who has no attractive options in any of these directions. The time has come for local boards of education to sit down with major employers, determine what is needed, who will provide it, and to ensure that what is needed is delivered. All students who can meet graduation requirements should be assured of an aggressive effort by school counselors to work with other public agencies and private employers in order to place graduates in either post-secondary programs or jobs. Doing this successfully requires that students and their parents be given some curricular choices early in the high school program and, with the assistance of counselors, make well-informed choices. While these choices should not be irrevocable, they must be made in order to avoid drift, apathy, and failure. To make informed decisions, students need information about careers, counseling, and exposure to the world of work prior to entering the high school.

The Quality of Teaching Staff and Achievement

There are several reasons for concern about the quality of new entrants into the nation's teaching force. National data on new entrants into teacher education programs show them to be, on the average, among the intellectually least able college students.[90,104] A state study in North Carolina and a national study have noted a decline in the overall ability of new recruits to teaching and reported that the more intellectually talented teachers are the most likely to leave the profession.[90] There are serious shortages of teachers in math and science.[75] A recent national survey of school principals found that the principals regard over half of their current math teachers as inadequately prepared or unqualified. There are also teacher shortages in bilingual education, certain vocational fields, and computer sciences. National and state surveys of teachers report morale is low and many wish to leave the profession as soon as possible.

As enrollment decline ends and the teachers hired during the rapid-growth period of the 1960's reach retirement age, the demand for qualified teachers will increase. These trends will probably have greater impact on urban schools than on those in the suburbs because the tasks confronting urban teachers are more difficult and, therefore, recruitment is also more difficult. There may be a serious decline in the quality of the teaching force in the next decade unless steps are taken to hold able teachers and to recruit talent from new sources.

QUALITY OF STAFF AND QUALITY OF WORK LIFE

The shortage of teaching jobs generally and the image of public education as a declining industry certainly affect the ability of colleges of education and school districts to recruit and hold capable individuals. The failure of starting salaries to keep pace with inflation[90] and competition from high-paying jobs for teachers in select content areas have also had their effect. New job options for women and for minorities have further reduced the talent pools upon which the schools traditionally have depended.[90]

These conditions are not likely to be significantly altered by public policy in the short-run. However, actions can be taken to alleviate those conditions in schools which contribute to the loss of able teachers (and perhaps to the failure to recruit others). Teachers are increasingly dissatisfied with their jobs and with conditions under which they work.[72,79] Not only are facilities old and poorly maintained in many districts but, more important, in some schools and districts, teachers are not treated as profes-

sionals or even as valued employees. The trend toward centralized decision-making over the past several decades has reduced teacher status and decreased the amount of influence teachers have over curriculum decisions and other matters of educational policy and practice.[98]

Teachers often complain they have too little opportunity to teach because of intrusions, bureaucratic red tape, lack of materials, poor allocation of time, or lack of firm discipline policies. The opportunity to be effective is often missing, thus reducing work satisfaction. Teachers also complain about lack of recognition, lack of opportunity to work with their peers and lack of freedom to test new ideas. All of these factors influence motivation and job satisfaction, and, therefore, contribute to teachers' decisions to leave the profession.

Researchers have found that productivity is affected by the characteristics of the work tasks and the work setting. Effective schools are similar in many regards to all productive organizations: they have clear goals, high task orientation, feedback on performance, high levels of employee discretion, adequate resources and effective leadership. The critical conditions that motivate and satisfy employees are met in effective schools. There is a sense of achievement, there is recognition, the work is not narrowly prescribed, and staff participate in decisions affecting their work. When teachers have such incentives, their productivity increases and student achievement rises.

Many school districts do not provide the conditions necessary for effective instruction. Management is autocratic, teachers are isolated, goals are vague, achievement or effort goes unrecognized, discipline is poorly enforced, absenteeism is high, and resources are inadequate and allocated with little thought to educational goals. From this perspective, the problems facing school administrators working to create more effective schools are similar to those confronting business executives seeking higher productivity. There are some obvious differences in the two situations but there are also significant parallels. Increased student learning requires increased work by both students and staff. Productive work requires competence, motivation, opportunity, and resources. And, in an effective school, like any other organization, the efforts of many workers must be orchestrated into a harmonious whole. This requires leadership, good management, and a good work climate.

In the private sector, efforts are underway to raise productivity by improving the quality of work life. These efforts are not limited to assembly line workers; they are being used to improve the performance of white-collar workers and professionals as well. Redesign of jobs to make them more interesting, the creation of work groups to provide peer support and greater variety in tasks, participation in decision making, the use of quality circles, and development of new career ladders are among the strategies being employed. Underlying these approaches is the recognition that problems are created by reducing employee discretion, failing to use employee abilities, and failing to recognize people's need to gain satisfaction from their work.

Educators should examine these techniques, adapt them to school settings, and experiment with them. New curriculum and new technology are unlikely to alleviate the root causes of ineffectiveness. The importance of human factors must be recognized and work environments must be created that are optimal for productivity. This may require challenging sacred school traditions; it certainly will require changes in the management of the schools. However, it is necessary if talented people are to be recruited and retained in the teaching profession.

Some specific actions that might be taken are:

☐ Colleges and universities can actively recruit and use master teachers in their teacher-preparation programs.

☐ States can provide for the certification of master teachers who can assist with in-service programs and induction programs for new teachers.

☐ Certification requirements for school administrators and graduate programs in administration can be revised to include increased training in personnel management, communications, and supervision; recognition of the different skills required by building and district administrators; and a field practicum prior to certification.

☐ Assessment centers, such as that being developed by the National Association of Secondary School Principals, can be used to screen applicants for administrative positions in local districts and to provide incumbents with direction for honing their skills.

☐ Districts can adapt and implement programs being used successfully in industry to improve the quality of work life and to raise productivity.

☐ Districts can develop orientation programs for new teachers that provide direct assistance to those teachers in the classroom and help them acquire needed skills.

☐ Districts can seek new ways to recognize outstanding teachers. One such method is to create positions of resource teachers and rotate master teachers into those positions.

☐ Districts can encourage more participatory decision-making at the building level and reverse the centralization trend by delegating more planning functions to building staff.

The Social Environment and Achievement

During the past decade it became popular to argue that the public schools are powerless to compensate for the educational disadvantages of students from poor families or whose parents are poorly educated. Such students, it is contended, have intellectual, linguistic, and behavioral handicaps that render high educational attainment unlikely. Social origins — the argument goes — are the determining factor in educational achievement and there is little the schools can do to alter this reality. Similar reasoning has been applied to the growing number of children who live in single-parent families.

Philosophically, this argument is problematic because it is inconsistent with the principle of equal opportunity. Such beliefs tend to become self-fulfilling prophecies and are themselves major obstacles to the fulfillment of the national goal of equal opportunity. Practically, the argument is invalid because it has been repeatedly demonstrated that there are schools which are able to reduce the gaps in performance between students from working class and middle class families. There are some effective schools serving the children of the urban poor. These schools serve as inspirations to all public school personnel and provide models to guide educational policy and practice.

Even if there were only one such school, it would cast doubt on the social origins argument. Consequently, it is our duty to ask why some public schools succeed while others fall short. The answers to this question will lead to the improvement of all public schools.

There are special obstacles to be overcome in the urban environment, however, and educational success may require bold and creative leadership. For example, the problems of drug and alcohol abuse, teenage pregnancy, and delinquency that confront educators in most school districts may occur more frequently in some urban schools. While these issues have been considered by many people and agencies and steps have been taken to address them at state and local levels, there is still much to be done if current trends are to be reversed and these problems brought under control.

Two conditions, in particular, pose major obstacles to the educational success of urban youth: the shortage of employment opportunities for urban youth, particularly for minority youth both while they are in school and after they leave; and the stress, anxiety, and responsibility falling upon children and parents who live in poverty. The latter condition is particularly acute for teenage and single-parent families. Both of these problems are steadily worsening as the rate of teenage unemployment and the number of teenage parents in urban areas continue to grow.

Jobs are important because student motivation rests heavily upon the belief that attending school will lead to a job and, that the more the student achieves, the better that job is likely to be. For students to learn, they must be willing to work at school. For students to work in a sustained manner, they must be motivated. Two important factors affecting student motivation are immediate rewards, such as teacher praise and good grades, and long-term rewards, such as going to college or getting a good job. Both of these factors may be weak or absent for some students.

Researchers have found that poor children receive less praise and, in some cases, are graded more harshly than their middle class peers.[41,101] Children from poor families often enter school with less understanding of the behavioral standards of the school and the work expected of them than their middle-class peers, and the schools do too little to help them acquire these understandings and skills. As a result, their work may be misdirected, their grades may be lower than they expect, and their motivation may wane. In more effective schools, emphasis is placed on teaching children how work is to be done and effort, as well as performance, is rewarded.[15,101] This is not an argument in support of low standards or grade inflation, both of which are destructive to ultimate educational success. It is an argument for consistent attention to student motivation and the development of policies and programs to build motivation. Study skills and proper classroom behavior must be stressed in pre-school, kindergarten, and elementary programs. Student progress, as well as absolute levels of achievement, should be rewarded and every opportunity taken to acknowledge high performance in academics, attendance, athletics, citizenship, and other areas of student activity.

The belief that what is learned in school and the grades that are earned will play a major role in shaping their adult lives is what keeps older children and adolescents at work in school and bolsters the authority of school staff. If students lose faith in this belief, they are likely to do less work or to disrupt the work of the school because they perceive themselves as prisoners rather than as beneficiaries of the system.

Some urban students come from families in which no one is employed. Many of these students have witnessed their parents and family members struggle to find and retain jobs. They have watched their older brothers and sisters and friends graduate from high school only to find that there is no work or that they lack the requisite skills. Under these discouraging conditions, it is difficult for students to maintain high levels of motivation. Thus, the public ought not be surprised that urban schools frequently have severe attendance problems, high dropout rates, and low test scores. Hope is a prerequisite for motivation and effort and when there is little basis for hope, some give up.

Nationwide, the rate of out-of-wedlock births has climbed steadily since 1960, with an equally dramatic increase in teenage pregnancies. In 1979, 17 percent of all births in the United States occurred out of wedlock and 54 percent of all black children were born to unmarried women. To put

it differently, there were 15.1 children born per 1,000 unmarried white women in 1979 and 85.3 children per 1,000 unmarried black women.[103] The majority of these out-of-wedlock births were to teenage mothers.

It is difficult for families to stay together in our culture and it is even more difficult under conditions of poverty and unemployment. Single-parent families and unmarried mothers need special assistance if they are to cope with the problems of rearing children, making a living, and running a household. This is particularly true if the parents are only teenagers themselves. In 1978, over 40 percent of black families were headed by women and the trend was upward. Millions of children are in day care nationally; the vast majority in unlicensed homes. The increase in working mothers, the incidence of divorce, the incidence of out-of-wedlock births, the number of teenage pregnancies, and problems associated with chronic unemployment have created a national crisis in the care of children. This crisis is most severe in urban areas. Public education must take the lead in responding with services that strengthen the family and help young, single mothers become effective parents and respected bread winners. One way for school districts to do this is to work with other social service agencies in developing community schools that:

☐ provide day care programs for pre-school children and before/after hours programs for children with working parents;

☐ provide prenatal care and counseling for teenage mothers;

☐ provide sites for drug and alcohol prevention programs, family counseling, and delinquency prevention programs offered by public and private agencies and;

☐ offer a range of recreational and educational programs in the evenings and weekends that are family-oriented and provide opportunities for parents and children to be together.

Improving the Public Schools

Research has demonstrated that public schools can be effective. Such results are not attained, however, by adopting technical gimmicks or incremental curriculum reforms. Significant improvement requires a re-examination of organizational basics: resources, management, climate, staff competence, standards, and so on. How can such changes be accomplished? In particular, how can they be achieved during an era of declining resources?

There are educational programs which, according to their promoters and advocates, can turn an academically inferior school into an effective one simply by following the prescribed recipe or using the recommended techniques. Unfortunately, such claims tend to be exaggerated. Two decades of experience with federal and state supported programs to improve public schools have demonstrated that there are many ways to fail and that what works brilliantly in one place fails in others. The specific context is all important in determining what to do and how to do it.[9] Each school and school district represent unique situations with different problems and different resources. Their staffs face different dilemmas in implementing solutions. Even schools facing similar problems may require different implementation strategies. There are no panaceas or easy recipes for school improvement.

Furthermore, the organizational structure of schools generates resistance to the adoption of new practices or changes in routines. Powerful forces operate to preserve the status quo. Communication among teachers and between teachers and administrators occurs less frequently than among employees in other work settings. Goals are unclear and often not shared — particularly in secondary schools.[43] Teachers are isolated by their classroom walls and by busy work schedules. Administrators face daily demands from students, parents, and others that pull them away from supervision. There is little time for planning or for practicing new skills. The organization does not bind people together in a common work effort and it becomes difficult and frustrating to try to introduce new practices. As a consequence, new educational ideas abound but the basic structure and routines of schools seem to go unchanged from year to year.

Undoubtedly other factors contribute to this situation. So many new ideas and techniques enter the educational marketplace and clamor for attention, all claiming to be supported by research, that educators and board members may be understandably reluctant to change policies and practices.

Often these new approaches are poorly defined and lack proper field testing; in short, their claims are not supported by convincing evidence. The closest thing to a consumer protection agency for public education is the Educational Products Information Exchange Institute (EPIE). However, its services are limited and not widely used. Efforts to protect the consumer by "validating" programs or conducting quasi-experiments with alternate educational approaches have produced mixed results.

Fortunately, a decade of studies on improvement efforts and the diffusion of innovations has provided some insight into the "do's and don'ts" of school improvement. The major obstructions to school improvement cited in the literature are:

The assumption that the problems of effectiveness are technical and can be solved with new curricula or instructional techniques and the related assumption that this technology can be transported from district to district and school to school with little alteration. These assumptions were the foundation of federal policy for the past two decades;[9]

The lack of consensus about goals, poor internal communications, and weak incentives for cooperation that are typical of public schools. These organizational aspects of schools make it difficult to spread a new practice within a school or to transfer an idea or technique from school to school. The larger the school or school district, the more severe these problems will be, which is why improvements are easier to implement in small schools and small districts;[30,32,44,68]

The parallel assumption that improvement can be attained by training individual teachers or administrators who then will implement the new ideas in their schools with little or no support. This assumption underlies the enormous workshop industry in education and is one rationale for the many conferences and meetings attended by educators;[30,68]

The use of top-down approaches to decision-making and planning that often fail to involve the individuals who are closest to the problems and fail to develop understanding or commitment among those who must implement the proposed changes;[9,39,91]

Political interference during the implementation process from interest groups or board members or an abandonment of the program because a leader departs[81] and;

The lack of competent external assistance to school staff who must implement the program or the failure to provide such assistance for a long enough time period.[66]

These are some of the negative lessons from the research on school improvement. There are some positive findings as well. For example, it is now generally accepted that the individual school is the proper site for planning improvements. That is the place where the work of education is

conducted and any changes in the work must be implemented by the staff of the school. Thus, it is not surprising that a number of studies have concluded that planning and problem-solving at the building-level are associated with successful implementation.[32,65,68]

In some districts, building administrators, their staffs and, in some instances, parents are given considerable autonomy to determine goals, set policy, develop curricula, hire personnel, and allocate resources — all within the parameters of the policies set by the board and superintendent. This is known as school-site management. School-site management may not be necessary to bring about successful school improvement, but the message from the research is consistent and clear — building administrators and school faculties must be held responsible for the quality of instruction in their schools and they must be given the elbow room to succeed or fail in their efforts to create high quality programs.

A second lesson drawn from the same research has to do with the importance of participation. Full implementation of a new educational practice is more likely when teaching staff have been involved in the problem-solving and planning process.[65,68] This is especially important for educators who have developed a healthy skepticism about new improvement efforts — and are still wondering what happened to last year's initiatives. These educators must be convinced there will be practical payoffs before they will invest their time and energy in new initiatives. They also must be convinced that the district or building leaders are serious about school improvement and not merely using rhetoric about improvement to enhance their public image.[8,10]

Trust is a critical ingredient. The quality of the relationships in the school, between the principal and the teachers and among the teachers themselves, shapes the course of an improvement program.[68,89] No new approach can work if people are unwilling to take risks and be responsible for its success or failure. But, risking requires trust. If people make an honest effort to try something new and are punished if their innovation fails to produce the desired results, the capability of the school and district to improve may be permanently damaged.

Organizational development offers an approach to school improvement that explicitly seeks to build commitment and overcome cynicism. At the same time, organizational development focuses attention on the improvement of the systems and procedures used by the organization. Applied behavioral science and management science are combined to develop strategies to improve communication, build trust and cooperation, enhance an organization's problem-solving and decision-making capabilities, strengthen its planning processes, and establish collaborative working environments. A recent review of the use of organizational development in schools found it was effective in the limited number of known applications. The review concluded that organizational development strategies have great potential for use in schools.[46] Organizational development consultants can help restore a sense of community within a

school, overcome the isolation of staff, and create the conditions associated with effective schools.[91] This approach may be particularly suited for use in high schools where organizational complexity, strong content orientation, disagreement about goals, and traditional patterns of thinking make change particularly difficult.[8,43]

A fourth essential condition for school improvement is support from groups external to the school. Successful implementation appears to be much more likely when central office staff provide active support but are not overly directive.[9] Boards do not always get involved, but when they do, their influence is decisive.[12] Boards must allow for reasonable timeframes, provide support and recognition, and insure that proper evaluations are conducted. Parents are more likely to be involved now than ever before. Broad-scope change efforts in a school should seek parental support in advance. Active approval by the district leadership and support from the community are needed for any program that takes time and resources and proposes to alter the experiences provided to students.

External support also includes technical assistance. Teachers typically do not have much contact with experts.[68] A recent reanalysis of the Rand Corporation's, *Federal Programs Supporting Educational Change,* found that teachers involved in federally-funded programs receive little help with their implementation problems.[34] This study challenged the conventional wisdom that external consultants are of little value — a claim often made to support arguments that teachers should be left alone to do their own development work. Two other recent large-scale studies of improvement efforts also found external assistance to be a positive factor in successful implementation.[32,65]

The type of assistance available is critically important to any school-change efforts. One-shot presentations or workshops tend to do little good; continuity and follow-up are essential. Support provided in a collaborative manner produces better results than having an expert telling staff how things should be done.[46] Poor assistance can encourage dependency and incompetence. If low expectations influence student efforts, it is likely that teachers can be similarly influenced by external experts. Finally, assistance that is free may not be valued highly; when administrators dedicate time and money, assistance seems to be taken more seriously. One of the two studies of federal change efforts cited earlier found no relationship between total dollars spent and success of a change effort, but did find a strong relationship between success and the local dollars involved in the program.[65]

Staff development and inservice programs can also play important roles in improvement programs.[53,63,64] Activities should be designed to support building-level improvement efforts. Teachers must see the practical payoffs in the form of increased understanding and new skills if they are to take such programs seriously. The district office should assist building staff with their efforts to plan inservice programs and provide needed support rather than planning and delivering staff development that is iso-

lated from school priorities.

Stable leadership and reasonable time frames are also essential ingredients to successful school improvement. Various analysts have noted the need for a zone of tolerance during the implementation period.[9,81,91] The absence of a protective umbrella for improvement efforts is a major cause of the failure to implement new practices. In urban areas where, on the average, superintendents and board members serve less than three years political support may not be stable enough to provide the continuity for successful long-term improvement. Since most observers agree that major improvements take three to five years to set in place, the turnover of leadership poses a serious problem. If the public schools are to improve, teaching staff must be given the time and resources needed to succeed and be protected from premature criticisms and disruptive interference.

The problems facing our public schools are serious but not insurmountable. Schools can change and the changes can bring greater effectiveness. Progress, however, requires everyone — teachers, parents, administrators, students, board of education members and the community to commit themselves to the task and to put the common good before parochial interests. Our schools need to be examined in the light of what we know about effective schools. We must ask ourselves whether the factors that make those schools effective are present in our own schools. And, if our answer is no, we must develop and implement improvement strategies that have a high probability of success. To do any less will make us all accomplices in denying the youth of the United States their opportunity to be fully-productive adults. Ultimately, this can only lead to a weakening of the fabric of our society. The public schools, our schools, can, and must, be places where our children discover and develop their full potential. Our job is to create those schools.

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